## Section 1
## Historical Highlights – The Oregon Trail

The Oregon Trail was the highway to the future for many who traveled 2000 mile length. They hoped it would lead to a better life, fertile crop land, and a chance to control their own destiny. For many, these hopes and dreams were fulfilled, but for some the dream died — the highway was filled with danger, hardships and tragedy. The great road west, known as the Oregon Trail, had its first real traffic in 1843 when a train of about 1000 people left Independence, Missouri heading west to Oregon. Marcus Whitman traveled with this group of emigrants, helping to guide them across the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains. The trail was heavily used until the mid-1860's, when trains replaced wagons as a means of cross-country travel.

The road began in Missouri, followed the North Platte River until it reached the Sweetwater River. The river offered relatively easy travel and a close water source. The Sweetwater River banks led the wagon trains up the gentle slopes of South Pass, where pioneers crossed the Rocky Mountains. The trail then crossed the rugged Snake River Desert and treacherous Blue Mountains before reaching the Columbia River. Here, pioneers chose either to use rafts to transport wagons down the river or follow the Barlow Road around Mount Hood to their final destination in Oregon City.

The Independence and St. Joseph, Missouri areas were the most common starting or "jumping off" places. Emigrants gathered there in large numbers before heading west.. This was the place to make sure your "outfit" was fully assembled and equipped. While television has led many to think the emigrant wagons were pulled with horses, the truth is oxen were the number one draft animal of the great migrations. About 80% of the wagons in 1850 were hauled by oxen. Horses were expensive - about $200.00 for one of medium quality and their upkeep was demanding. A horse would not eat the dried grasses of the plains, he was bothered with insects, and the tepid water of the Platte gave him distemper. Horses were used only by those outfits prosperous enough to carry grain for them.

Mules were tough and durable, and better able to survive the plains' dry feed and water, but at times their temperament was given to mayhem! They were often used for pack trains, but diaries are filled with the troubles caused by contrary mules. Oxen, however, were adaptable and calm. They survived on the dried prairie grasses and the Indians did not steal them as they would horses or mules, and oxen were much cheaper at $50.00 to $65.00 per head. It was recommended that oxen be five years or older. A wagon needed at least two span, or pair, of oxen to pull it and if possible, a spare pair should be taken. Oxen hooves required attention, and shoes were applied to their feet to protect them. If iron shoes were not available, emigrants nailed sole leather on or smeared the hooves with tar or grease and fastened on boots made of buffalo hide. Families had great affection for their oxen, giving them names like any pet.. When one died, the whole family grieved.

Wagons used on the Oregon Trail were not the boat-shaped Conestoga, but more of a farm wagon, capable of hauling from 1600 to 2500 pounds. It was protected with bows reaching about 5 feet above the wagon bed and covered with some type of heavy, rain proof canvas-like material. Spare parts, tongues, spokes, and axles were carried, often slung under the wagon bed. Grease buckets, water barrels, heavy rope (at least 100 feet was recommended), and chains completed the running gear accessories. When store-bought grease, necessary for wheel bearings was exhausted, boiled buffalo or wolf grease served the purpose.

Provisions were of vital importance to the emigrant. The work was strenuous, so foods high in calories were favored. The food supply was the heaviest and most essential part of the covered wagon cargo. A delicate balance was necessary, for hauling too much food would wear down the animals, but not enough could result in starvation. While some wild berries, roots, greens, and fish might supplement the diet, it was too risky to depend on these. It was also not a good idea to depend on too much success in hunting or foraging on the semiarid and thinly covered high plains. Prior to 1849 there were no stores or respectable trading posts along the route. Even after the establishment of the post at Scotts Bluff and Army quartermaster posts at Fort Kearny and Ft. Laramie, supplies were meager and extremely expensive.

It was recommended by those who wrote early guide books that each emigrant be supplied with 200 pounds of flour, 150 pounds bacon, 10 pounds coffee, 20 pounds sugar and 10 pounds of salt. Basic kitchen equipment consisted of a cooking kettle (Dutch oven), fry pan, coffee pot, tin plates, cups, knives and forks. Stoves were a help, but the smaller the better, as heavy stoves were likely to end up on the side of the trail when the route became difficult.

Bread-bacon-coffee was the staple diet. Most people extended their basic recommended list by adding dried beans, rice, dried fruit, tea, vinegar, pickles, ginger, mustard, and saleratus (baking soda). While pioneer women were used to baking bread at home, it took some experimenting and practice to bake bread in a Dutch oven or reflector oven under prairie conditions with a buffalo chip fire, blowing ashes, dust, and insects. Corn meal, and pilot bread or ships biscuits were also welcome additions.

While the science of dietetics was not completely understood, there were many suggestions to help ward off scurvy, dysentery and other ailments obviously directly related to an inadequate or unbalanced diet. Some pioneers brought a few chickens along in cages tied to the side of the wagon. Families with small children were more likely to drive milk cows along. Milk was a health giving supplement to a family diet made mainly of meat and bread.

The standard date for departure from any of the jumping-off places was April 15 - give or take a week or two, with expected arrival in Oregon or California hopefully by September 1, but not later then October 1. An ideal crossing was 120 days, April 15 to August 15, a daily average for the 2000 mile long trail of 15 miles per day. Realistically,

a typical crossing took about two weeks longer. On a good day more than 15 miles could be covered, on a bad day, much less.
In many wide open places, trains broke up into two or more columns, spreading out to find relief from the dust. When the road narrowed due to the topography, the wagons formed a single line and typically a wagon held the same position in line for the whole day. Each morning the wagons would have rotted positions in the line, one day being spent in the back of the line, one in the middle, and the one in the front. There were frequently quarrels between oxen and horse teams. Oxen were largely in the majority, and some of the drivers seemed to take delight in holding up the faster traveling horse teams in narrow spots.

The day usually started about 6:00 a.m. and lasted until around 5:00 p.m. with a one hour rest at noon. This “nooning” was essential because it gave both man and animal a much needed rest. The oxen were not unyoked, but were allowed to graze.

The first order of business at the end of the day was forming a corral by pulling the wagons into a circle. It was normally circular or oblong in shape, with the tongue of one wagon chained to the rear of the next to form a fence. Originally designed as a defense against Indian attacks, which were rare, or desperadoes and wild animals, it became an institution, as much for companionship as anything else. An opening or two was left for passage of livestock which could be closed with the tongue of a wagon.

The evening campfire was important beyond debate. It provided comforting warmth and a place to dry wet clothes and cook a hot supper. While the Platte River bottoms are choked with trees today, 150 years ago frequent prairie fires kept the trees from maturing. How did the emigrants keep warm and fry their bacon and bake their bread? They cut green willows when available, burned drift wood when found, broke up the occasional abandoned wagon box, twisted dry grass into tight twists, and upon arrival in buffalo country, used dried buffalo chips, sometimes called prairie coal.

Water was important, of course, but was not a real problem from Missouri to South Pass. Most people took their supply directly from the Platte, which one witty traveler described as too thick to drink and too thin to plow. If springs were found, this was better water. The fastidious often tried to filter out some of the sand and other particles found in the river water. Some boiled their water, not so much to insure its safety, but to kill the wiggle-tails. Drinking untreated water was
a factor in the high mortality rate.

Sleeping arrangements were simple. Women and children might sleep on storage boxes in the wagon, but most beds were made of a blanket, a piece of canvas, and an India rubber cloth or buffalo robe on the ground. Tents were luxuries, but they away in the wind and often were simply discarded. No sleeping pills were needed by the emigrants - fatigue and exhaustion made the ground seem soft.

The Oregon migrations were a family affair, often running at least 50 percent women and children. There were courtings and marriages among the young and unmarried members of the trains.

There was a high incidence of childbirth on the trail, and often those who kept diaries made no mention of an impending birth until a short entry announced the arrival of a new member of the family. Tragedy often came with the arrival of an infant, death during childbirth was common and infant mortality was high. Poor nutrition, lack of medical care and poor sanitation caused many of these deaths. Another contributing factor was the necessity to keep moving westward without time for recovery from the birth..

Religion played an important role in the westward migrations, for a majority of these emigrants were devout Christians. While it was not practical to lay over on Sunday, some sort of Sabbath observance was usually held. If the train stopped on the Sabbath, it was not truly a day of rest - the women washed clothes or did extra cooking and the men repaired wagons, harnesses, etc.
Given the extremes which tested the emigrants to the limit of their endurance and fortitude, the evidence of crime among the travelers was low. Under the circumstances, the vast majority of pioneers behaved admirably. There were no civil laws, no marshals, sheriffs, or courts of law to protect those who crossed the plains. The military offered some protection near the forts, but that was limited. The only effective law was the inward sense of morality and the outward law-abiding sense that was normal for most pioneers.

While some people seemed to thrive on the excitement and adventure of the journey across the plains, for many it was an ordeal. After surviving untold hardships, there arose the threat of disease and death. There are, of course, no valid mortality rates available. Estimates are as large as 30,000 deaths, but a more conservative estimate is 20,000 for the entire 2000 miles of the Oregon Trail - an average of ten graves per mile. Assuming the grand total of 350,000 people emigrating is correct, that averages to be one death for every seventeen persons who started.

Deaths occurred from poor sanitation practices in cooking and food storage, bad water, and poor living conditions. Some people suffering from “consumption” or tuberculosis, made or tried to make the journey because it was believed that outdoor exercise would overcome the disease.

What better exercise than walking across the prairie, mountains, and desert for 2000 miles! Pneumonia, whooping cough, measles, small pox and various other miscellaneous sicknesses and diseases caused many deaths. Cholera, caused by drinking infected water, was the greatest killer on the Oregon Trail.

Accidents associated with wagon travel also took their toll. Injuries, maimigs, and death were caused by drownings, wagon accidents (typically being un over by a wagon), accidental shootings, and animal handling. Fatigue caused carelessness and carelessness led to these and other accidents.

Weather extremes were among the hardships along the Platte River that could not be avoided and simply had to be endured. April and May could be cold and wet, and since the emigrants traveled with a meager supply of clothes and bedding, many were uncomfortable. Later, heat and dust became the enemy. When it rained, low places became bogs for wagons to mire down in, and rivers that had to be crossed became raging torrents.

After surviving the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains, then making their way along Snake River, the Blue Mountains still had to be crossed. Many found the road through the Blues more difficult than crossing the Rockies. Travelers then journeyed across eastern Oregon to the Columbia River. For some historians, the Oregon Trail ended at The Dalles, but many consider its true end to be at Oregon City.

After reaching The Dalles, wagons were floated down the Columbia River on rafts. This method changed in 1846 when The Barlow road was built around Mount Hood. This gave travelers another, but still difficult, alternative to river travel.

Finally! The Valley of the Willamette. Here was the land office where you could file your land claim. Where hopes and dreams either blossomed and bore fruit or died. Those who had endured came to this valley to seize the land, settle it, come to terms with it, and call it home.

## Oregon Trail Northwest Landmarks

Soda Springs

One of the most pleasant places on the Oregon Trail was this area in Idaho where springs of carbonated water bubbled from the ground. With a little sugar added to it, the water tasted very good to weary travelers. Today, all the springs are gone except Hooper Spring on the outskirts of Soda Springs, Idaho. A little pavilion has been built over it where visitors can still see the tiny bubbles rising to the surface. The other springs are dry or are located under the town reservoir.

**Fort Hall**

The trail north from the Bear River to the Portneuf River, which would take travelers to Fort Hall, was difficult, but by now the road-hardened travelers handled it routinely. Nine or ten days travel brought them to Fort Hall — that remarkable outpost of Yankee entrepreneurship in the wilderness.
Fort Hall became a Hudson's Bay Company trading post shortly after its construction. Travelers rested here and got new supplies when they were available. The original site of Fort Hall is on private property today, but a replica has been built in the city of Pocatello where visitors may see how the original fort looked.

The fort was abandoned in 1855, but emigrants continued to camp in the abandoned buildings and graze stock in the pastures until 1863. That year, extraordinary floods swept away even the remains.

**American Falls**

The pioneers continued to follow the Snake River for over 300 miles after leaving Fort Hall. And what a river! Some emigrants had never seen the like. They had driven wagons across the mile-wide Platte, but this river was a torrent, battering the jagged walls of its lava canyon. From Fort Hall, the trail had swung slightly southwest. It was rough and difficult, described as being “a very rocky road hard on wagons...the river had precipitous banks in places 200 feet of rock perpendicular.” They passed American Falls, really a rapid, but the noisiest falls some of them had ever seen, and repeated the story that it was named for some American trappers who were swept over and drowned.

Most of the Oregon Trail route through Idaho runs along the Snake River. At American Falls the river dropped fifty feet in Oregon Trail days. Now, because of locks and dams, most of the falls are dry, except in the spring.

**Three Island Crossing**

When the Snake River was wild and untamed, it was dangerous to cross. The water was deep, fast, and usually extremely cold. However, crossing the river saved many miles of travel to Fort Boise. Wagon trains made the crossing near present day Glenns Ferry, Idaho where there were three small islands situated like stepping stones across the river. These three islands split the current into channels and made crossing easier. Where the channel was most narrow between the bank and the first island, they pushed in their cattle and wagons, crossed, then went to the head of the next island, repeated this process one more time, and if no other mishaps occurred while negotiating the river, the crossing was completed.

Indians sometimes harassed the wagon trains at Three Island Crossing. A party which got only half its wagons across and had to camp on both sides of the river would have difficulty guarding both camps adequately that night. If the water was too high, an alternate trail to the south was used, but it was longer and more difficult.

Today, visitors can stop at a state park and look across the river where the old wagon ruts come down to the water’s edge.

**Fort Boise**

Because some emigrants failed to ford the Snake River at Three Island Crossing, they stayed on the south branch through rough land south of the river. The other half used different routes on the north side. The main north trail first headed toward Teapot Dome,

a hill resembling a turtle that once had steam from hot springs rising around it. Eight miles from this location, they could see the valley of the Boise River, a delight to eyes which had endured the blasted, volcanic landscape along the Snake River for 350 miles. Heavily wooded, it promised shade and firewood.

Forty-five miles to the west, the Hudson's Bay Company had built the first Fort Boise as a trading post. Overlanders could rest and get supplies as they could at other trading posts. Nothing remains of it today, but the location is marked with an interesting monument in the shape of a lion's head. A replica of Old Fort Boise has been constructed in the nearby town of Parma, Idaho. Volunteers established a new Fort Boise, an American Army post, in 1863 at the location of present-day Boise, Idaho. Its occupants protected Oregon Trail emigrants and helped suppress Bannock Indians in 1878.

**Farewell Bend**

The Oregon Trail followed the Snake River for only a few miles after entering Oregon. At Farewell Bend, overlanders said goodbye to the Snake and turned northwest toward the Columbia River. Even though they were getting closer to their destination, there were still many hardships ahead of them.
There was something contradictory in the mood that struck the emigrants along this stretch of the trail. There was excitement and exhilaration in being so close to the ending of such a monumental effort, but the great Blue Mountains lay ahead and the thought of crossing these mountains worried the travelers a great deal. Though the snow that blanketed these mountains was indeed beautiful, it also posed a serious threat to the weary travelers.

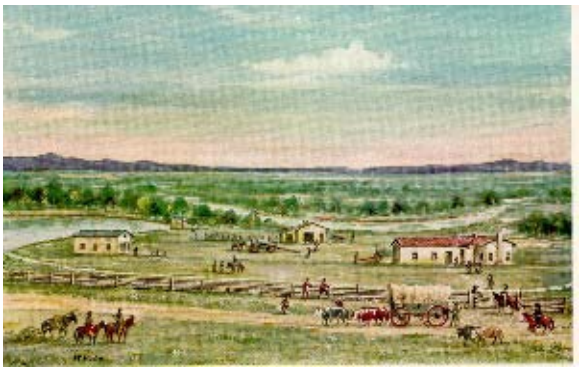
**Flagstaff Hill**

Flagstaff Hill was another difficult strain on the wagon trains. Almost everyone was physically and emotionally exhausted by this time. Most of the emigrants had left Missouri in late April, early May. It was sometimes the middle to end of September by the time they reached Flagstaff Hill. Many months had already passed, and there was still rough terrain to cross. Many animals had already died along the way. In places, dead animals literally littered the trails. A great number of people had died also, and often, due to the unceasing need keep moving west, the deceased were hastily buried along the trail.

When the overlanders reached the summit of Flagstaff Hill, they saw the beautiful Baker Valley spreading out below them—full of grass and water, but they also saw the awesome snow-covered Blue Mountains rising up in the distance. Despite the serenity

of the Baker Valley below them, the travelers knew that they still had many hard miles ahead of them.

**Mission at Waiilatpu**



In 1836, Dr. Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, the Reverend Henry and Eliza Spalding, and William H. Gray crossed the North American continent from New York state to a remote and largely unknown land called Oregon. They journeyed to Oregon in order to establish missions and to teach the Indians of the area about Christianity. Dr. Whitman established his mission among the Cayuse Indians at Waiilatpu, and the Reverend Spalding began his work among the Nez Perce at Lapwai, near Lewiston, Idaho. The trail the Whitmans followed across the continent, in part, had been established years earlier by Indians and fur traders. The primary route later became known as the Oregon Trail.

Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding were the first Euro-American women to cross the entire continent, and the Whitmans' baby, Alice Clarissa, was the first child born of United States citizens in the Pacific Northwest. These two events inspired many families to follow, for these acts proved that families and homes could be successfully established in Oregon, a land not yet belonging to the United States.

In the fall of 1842 two important events occurred:

- The first large group of emigrants to travel to the Oregon country stopped at the Waiilatpu Mission for rest and supplies. (Wagons had been taken as far as Fort Hall in Idaho, then, belongings were repacked on horses and the travelers continued to the Willamette Valley on horse and foot.)

- The American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions received reports of dissension among the missionaries. This dissension, as well as lack of money caused the American Board to order the Waiilatpu and Lapwai Missions closed. In a desperate attempt to save the missions from closure, Dr. Whitman rode from the Waiilatpu Mission all the way back to New York to plead that the missions remain open and active. Dr. Whitman was successful, and the missions remained open.

On his return to Oregon in 1843, Dr. Whitman successfully helped guide the first wagon train of emigrants to the Columbia River. This event provided the final thrust for the western expansion of the United States. Throughout the rest of its existence, the Waiilatpu Mission was a haven for the weary or sick overland traveler. Those who made the journey to the mission from the main Oregon Trail (the Umatilla Cutoff) could get

medical care, rest and supplies. Dr. Whitman and several others from the mission typically went south in September - October to the main route of the Oregon Trail to sell emigrants food and fresh supplies.

The Whitmans worked among the Cayuse and Walla Walla Indians for 11 years. The Whitmans attempted to teach the Indians principles of Christianity and the rudiments of agriculture, and Dr. Whitman also provided medical services. Dr. Whitman's success as a missionary however, was limited. Even though many of the Indians liked and respected him, some threatened the missionaries and destroyed mission property. Despite setbacks and occasional hostility, the Whitmans refused to abandon the mission. Their best efforts failed to prevent distrust and unrest among the Indians, and, on November 29, 1847, the mission effort ended in an outbreak of violence.

Several Cayuses led to the rising Indian resentment. Increasing numbers of emigrants entering their country and stories of settlers taking Indian land elsewhere convinced the Cayuse that their way of life was in danger. Their fears grew as, in 1847, a measles epidemic spread rapidly among the Indians. The Cayuse had no natural resistance to the new disease, and within a short time over half the tribe had contracted the measles and had died. When Whitman's medicine seemed to help the white children but not their own, many Cayuse believed that they were being poisoned to make way for more whites.

In a tragic and bloody attack, born of deep misunderstandings and grievances, a small group of Cayuse attacked the mission and killed Marcus Whitman, his wife Narcissa, and 11 others. The massacre ended American Board missionary work among the Oregon Indians. It also led to a war against the Cayuse, waged by settlers from the Willamette and lower Columbia Valleys.

In 1848, Joe Meek carried news of the tragedy, along with petitions from the settlers, to Washington, D.C. The killings spurred Congress into creating the Oregon Territory in August of that year, thus forming the first territorial government west of the Rocky Mountains.

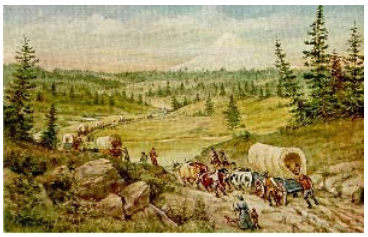
**The Dalles**

The land trail stopped here until Samuel Barlow built a road around Mt. Hood in 1846. Getting from the Waiilatpu Mission to the Columbia River was not a problem for the travelers. Emigrants who had visited Waiilatpu Mission often went down the Walla Walla River to the Columbia River, while other travelers who took the southern route, the Umatilla Cutoff, through Pendleton and Echo followed the Umatilla River. Once they reached the Columbia River, a major decision had to be made—What now? Some travelers built boats or rafts, while others hired Indian boatmen with their great canoes, or Hudson's Bay Company boats to get them down the river. The weary travelers were facing the challenge of the Columbia, an enormous river carrying the volume of all the rivers they had already crossed combined. This magnificent river was full of rapids,

huge rocks, and high cliff walls all posing tremendous dangers to the travelers. Many emigrants lost their lives at this point so near to their final destination.

The more cautious of the travelers carefully worked their wagons down the banks of the Columbia, but then came The Dalles, a place in the river where two great rocks restricted and channeled the flow of the entire river between them. The Dalles translates literally to “the trough”. There was absolutely no way for the wagons to continue on the riverbank, for it was about to cut through the Cascade Range, creating the Columbia River Gorge. At The Dalles some emigrants carried their belongings around the falls, then traded their oxen to Indians for boat fare downstream. If all went well, they would spend as little as two days on the river, soon after came the end to their months-long journey.

**Barlow Road**



After 1845 there was an alternative to the water route on the river, but it was not an easy one. In 1845, Samuel K. Barlow of Illinois, came upon the scene at The Dalles. He became very disgruntled at the high tolls being charged to transport the emigrants down the Columbia, and was also very concerned about the extreme hazards and dangers along this river section of the journey. Barlow scouted out a wagon road over the Cascades around the south side of Mt. Hood, and in 1846 began operating a toll road there. The road was very rough, with trees and rocks making the journey even more difficult.

**Questions and Answers About the Barlow Road**

Q: What is the Barlow Road?
A: The Barlow Road is the last overland segment of the Oregon Trail before reaching the Willamette Valley.

Q: Why is the Barlow Road important?
A: The Barlow Road provided an alternative to the dangerous and expensive route using rafts to transport wagons down the Columbia River.

Q: Why is the Barlow Road unique compared to other locations along the Oregon Trail?
A: The Barlow Trail is the first place on the 2,100 mile Oregon Trail where tolls were charged.

Q: How much were the tolls?
A: When the road opened in 1846, tolls were $5.00 per wagon and 10 cents for every head of livestock. By 1863, tolls had changed to $2.50 per wagon and team, 75 cents for horse and rider, and 10 cents for other livestock.

Q: Was that considered a lot of money?
A: $5.00 was about one week’s wages. Consider the alternative — floating down

the Columbia River in boats or rafts cost nearly $50.00!!!

Q: Where was the Barlow Road located?
A: Many say it started in The Dalles, but in 1845 when Sam Barlow scouted the new road, a route already existed from The Dalles to Tygh Valley. By 1850, many emigrants by-passed The Dalles by going straight from the John Day River to Tygh Valley—crossing the Deschutes River at Shearers Bridge. Tygh Valley could be considered the beginning of the Barlow Road.

The National Park Service considers the start of the road to be the first tollgate site on Gate Creek. Whatever starting point you choose, the ending was always Oregon City—the "End of the Oregon Trail."

Q: When was the Barlow Road used?
It operated under many owners as a toll road from 1846 to 1919. It was free after 1919 when the estate of the final owner deeded the road to the State of Oregon. Much of the road on the Forest is still in use today for recreation activities.

Q: How old was Samuel Barlow when he started the Barlow Road?
A: Barlow was 53 years old in 1845 when he helped lead the first wagon train of emigrants around the south side of Mount Hood.

Q: Is the Barlow Road intact in Mount Hood National Forest?
A: The Mount Hood National Forest maintains 40 miles of Barlow Road corridor. About 30 miles remain "intact," but not always like you would expect it. The Barlow Road underwent an evolution of travel modes—from oxen-pulled wagon to Model A Fords. Motorized travel meant mechanized re-routing and maintenance. The new motorized routes (including Mount Hood Loop Highway of 1924) left many isolated pieces of "pristine wagon ruts." These rut traces are visible today. In the Zigzag Valley, much of the original route is beneath U.S. Highway 26.

Q: How is the Oregon Trail and Barlow Road preserved today?
A: The Oregon Trail was named a National Historic Trail by Congress in 1978. The Historic Trail designation was meant to protect the trail remnants and artifacts for public enjoyment. Very little of the original Oregon Trail is visible today (about 20%). Of this 20%, approximately 10% is on National Forest land. The Barlow Road is a piece administered in part by the Forest Service. The Barlow Road was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on April 13, 1992 as a Historic District.

Q: What pioneer graves can be seen along the road?
A: In addition to "Pioneer Woman's Grave," several others exist at Summit Meadow. These are on private land across the street from where the Summit House stood.

Q: Are the ruts along the road just two parallel tracks?
A: No. The ruts you will see are actually a swale—a five to six foot wide trench worn out by the wagon and the stock that pulled them. Near “Pioneer Woman’s Grave,” they get four to five feet deep.

Q: Where are the best ruts to see located?
A: Many fine traces exist near Pioneer Woman’s Grave, Barlow Pass and Devil’s Half Acre. They are within 200 feet of paved parking at the first two sites. The hiking trail from Barlow Pass to Pioneer Woman’s Grave has some of the best to be seen and they are marked with rustic “Original Wagon Route” signs. It is about a one mile hike—you can go up or down. Other ruts exist on Laurel Hill—these remain for the true “rut nuts” to search out and discover without formal maps.

Q: Are rope burns still visible on trees on Laurel Hill from wagon lowering?
A: No. A stump with rope burn was near the top of chute number two, but the marks have disintegrated through time.

**Fort Vancouver**

Those who traveled to Oregon City by water from The Dalles came first to Fort Vancouver, a Hudson’s Bay Company fort and trading post. Fort Vancouver was the headquarters for the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Columbia Department, embracing present-day British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. The trading post also represented Britain’s business and governmental interests in competition with the United States.

The fort’s warehouses stocked supplies for the fur brigades, Indian and settler trade, and the 20 to 30 other Company posts in the Department. Most Indians were shrewd traders, so trade goods were carefully chosen. Almost all of the trade items were imported from or through Britain, so there was a two-year lapse between ordering and receiving. The fort’s shops bustled with activity, manufacturing as many items as possible. The fort echoed with the sounds of carpenters hammering and sawing, of blacksmiths making tools and repairing old ones, and of coopers making barrels. Carts rumbled through piled high with supplies and with firewood for the bakery’s large brick ovens. Indians arrived continually to trade. Passing farmers and herders tended crops and livestock. Company clerks bent over their account books figuring out how much who owed whom. Frequent visitors were welcomed and eagerly quizzed for news and gossip of the outside world.

**Oregon City**

Whether the route taken was by water or by land, the final destination for most overlanders was Oregon City on the Willamette River. They didn’t all come to Oregon City to settle within city limits, rather, Oregon City became more of a symbolic site. Men left their families at Oregon City while they searched for a place to call home. Oregon

City had the only judicial court and land office in the western United States. The emigrants arrived by the dozens. Some arrived needing food, shelter, and clothing; while others made it across in grand style with two or three wagons and plenty of livestock. By 1845, Oregon City had grown into a town of nearly one thousand people. The town had a Methodist Church, a Catholic chapel, two grist mills with a sawmill at each, four stores, two taverns, a hatter, a tanner, a physician, three lawyers, a printing office and newspaper, a lathe machine and a good brickyard. There were plenty of carpenters and masons employed.

Oregon City is also the town in which two men, Amos Lovejoy and Francis Pettygrove flipped a coin to decide what the new city north of them would be called. This city was where the Willamette flowed into the Columbia river. Each man wanted to name the city after his hometown back East. Amos wanted the town to be called Boston (Massachusetts) while Francis wanted it to be called Portland (Maine). Pettygrove was the winner of the coin toss, hence, the city of Portland was established, becoming a suburb of Oregon City.

One mystery still remains and that is the origin of the name “Oregon” which is what Oregon City is named after. The British, French, and Spanish all had interests in this northwest country and the name Oregon was possibly derived from a mixture or blend from all three of these nations’ languages. The earliest written account of the name Oregon comes from the English Army officer Major Roberts in 1765. He assumes the Columbia River to be the Ouragon or Ourigan River. So whether the name is derived from the Spanish words oregano, oreja, and orejon or from the French word Aragon the fact remains that we now refer to it as Oregon.